



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

BOBBY JINDAL
GOVERNOR

PEGGY M. HATCH
SECRETARY

For Immediate Release

Nov. 13, 2013

Contact: Tim Beckstrom

Phone: 225-219-3967

Iberville Parish man pleads guilty to illegal dumping of pollutants

BATON ROUGE – An Iberville Parish man was sentenced Wednesday, Nov. 13, in the 18th Judicial District Court for violating Louisiana’s Water Control Law and the Environmental Quality Act for the second time in three years. Tommy M. Francise, 58, of Plaquemine, illegally dumped wastes, and grease into a drainage canal behind his residence on Talbot Drive in Plaquemine.

Francise was arrested after the execution of a search warrant in September 2012, when investigators with DEQ’s Criminal Investigation Division and the Iberville Parish Sheriff’s Office observed a large area of soil contaminated with grease at the rear of Francise’s residence. Investigators found locations where used cooking oil was being discharged into the canal from a biodiesel production operation at the residence. The drainage canal was contaminated with grease, and vegetation near the production area and in the drainage canal was destroyed.

Francise had been previously arrested on separate yet identical charges by DEQ-CID investigators in April 2010. Francise pled guilty to those charges in March 2012. At that time, Judge Alvin Batiste ordered Francise to pay a \$2,500 fine and reimburse the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality in the amount of \$2,700 for the cost of investigation. Batiste sentenced Francise to three years of probation, ordered him to clean up the property in accordance with DEQ regulations, and ordered him to submit to random inspections. Francise was still on probation for his first guilty plea when he was arrested the second time for identical charges.

Francise pleaded guilty to his second offense on July 24, 2013, in 18th Judicial District Court and was sentenced today. In accepting Francise’s plea on his second offense, Judge J. Robin Free, 18th Judicial District Judge, ordered Francise to reimburse the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality in the amount of \$570 for the cost of investigation. Judge Free sentenced Francise to two additional years of probation. Francise was also ordered to clean up the property. In addition, Judge Free ordered Francise to cease storage and production of biodiesel at his residence throughout the term of his probation.

“Unfortunately, there are individuals who choose to pollute our environment instead of abiding by the law and disposing of waste materials properly,” said DEQ Secretary Peggy Hatch. “DEQ’s strong relationship with its local, state and federal partners has provided us with far-reaching investigative resources in order to prosecute violators. We ask that anyone having knowledge of any illegal dumping activity contact DEQ immediately in order that we may launch an investigation and bring violators to justice as soon as possible.”

The case was prosecuted by District Attorney Ricky Ward and Assistant District Attorneys Scott Stassi and Elizabeth Engolio.

The mission of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality is to protect the environment and public health. Any persons with knowledge of any spills, releases, odors, fish kills, open burning, waste tires and any other types of environmental incidents should contact DEQ at 225-219-3640 or Toll Free 1-888-763-5424. Citizens may also report an environmentally-related incident online at DEQ’s website: www.deq.louisiana.gov/apps/forms/irf/forms/.